

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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R 021336Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5171

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUDAPEST 0326

ROME FOR AMBASSADOR LODGE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, HU, VT

SUBJECT: VATICAN REPRESENTATIVES IN HUNGARY

1. AS DEPARTMENT NO DOUBT AWARE (FBIS), ARCHBISHOP LUIGI POGGI AND NUNCIATURE SECRETARY MUNOS F. SAINZ DISCUSSED CHURCH AFFAIRS IN BUDAPEST WITH HUNGARIAN RELIGIOUS AND STATE OFFICIALS JAN 19-24. THEY CALLED ON IMRE MIKLOS, HEAD OF STATE OFFICE FOR CHURCH AFFAIRS, AND ARCHBISHOP JOZSEF IJJAS, CHAIRMAN OF HUNGARIAN COUNCIL OF BISHOPS.

2. WE ARE STRUCK BY WHAT APPEARS TO BE INORDINATE AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT BY DELEGATION HERE, CONSIDERING THAT ONLY ONE CALL WAS MADE ON HUNGARIAN OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS. WE HAVE BEEN MAKING INQUIRIES AROUND TOWN (AMONG HUNGARIANS AND FOREIGNERS ALIKE) BUT HAVE BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL IN TURNING UP ANYTHING CONCRETE RE PURPOSE OF VISIT. OUR EDUCATED GUESS IS THAT POGGI
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VISIT PROBABLY WAS PART OF VATICAN EFFORT TO REACH

AGREEMENT WITH GOH ON DESIGNATION OF NEW BISHOP OF ESZTERGOM TO REPLACE MINDSZENTY. WE KNOW, FOR EXAMPLE, (75 BUDAPEST 3784) FROM ITALIAN SOURCE THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME JOCKEYING BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN VATICAN AND HUNGARIAN OFFICIALS ON THIS SUBJECT, VATICAN HAVING TURNED DOWN GOH CANDIDATE FABIAN, BISHOP OF SZAMBOTHELY, SOMETIME LAST YEAR. ITALIANS ALSO REPORTED LAST NOVEMBER THAT VATICAN DELEGATION COULD BE EXPECTED TO ARRIVE IN BUDAPEST SHORTLY, PRESUMABLY TO REACH AGREEMENT ON NOMINATION OF BISHOP OF ESZTERGOM. WE HAVE NO IDEA WHETHER AGREEMENT WAS REACHED DURING TALKS HERE. WE STRONGLY SUSPECT, HOWEVER, THAT POGGI DELEGATION INTERVIEWED PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES AND THAT THIS ACCOUNTS FOR FIVE-DAY SOJOURN.

3. IF AGREEMENT HAS ACTUALLY BEEN REACHED ON A SUCCESSOR TO MINDSZENTY AS BISHOP OF ESZTERGOM, WE HESITATE TO SAY AT THIS JUNCTURE THAT HE WILL SIMULTANEOUSLY BE DESIGNATED PRIMATE OF HUNGARY. HUNGARIAN OFFICIALS HAVE SHOWN SOME SENSITIVITY ON THIS QUESTION FOR REASONS BEST KNOWN TO THEMSELVES. THIS SENSITIVITY MAY STEM FROM NATIVE HUNGARIAN POLITICAL CAUTION, GOVERNMENT BEING MORE INCLINED TO TAKE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH VATICAN AT MEASURED STEP-BY-STEP PACE. IF GOH AND ROME HAVE REACHED AGREEMENT ON SUCCESSOR TO MINDSZENTY AS BISHOP OF ESZTERGOM, ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN HUNGARY AND VATICAN MAY NOT BE FAR OFF.
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